United Nations A/63/152/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 May 2009

Original: English

Sixty-third session
Agenda items 41 and 124

Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the progress made by the United Nations system organizations in achieving Millennium Development Goal 6, Target 7, to combat HIV/AIDS

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith, for the consideration of the General Assembly, his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the progress made by the organizations of the United Nations system in achieving Millennium Development Goal 6, Target 7, to combat HIV/AIDS (A/63/152).[1]

[1] Compiling the CEB comments on Joint Inspection Unit reports requires timely submission to the CEB secretariat of reports by the Joint Inspection Unit, followed by extensive and frequent consultation with agencies throughout the system, which sometimes delays the production and submission of the report. CEB regrets any inconvenience this may cause.

09-33227 (E) 220509

Please recycle

Summary

The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Review of the progress made by the United Nations system organizations in achieving Millennium Development Goal 6, Target 7, to combat HIV/AIDS", as contained in document A/63/152, focuses on the role and involvement of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) secretariat and the co-sponsors and other stakeholders in achieving the goal to halt, and begin to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

The current report presents the views of the organizations of the United Nations system on the recommendations provided in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. The views of the system have been consolidated on the basis of inputs provided by member organizations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), which expressed appreciation for a comprehensive review of a very broad subject. Organizations of the United Nations system note that achieving the Millennium Development Goals depends on actions by Member States and that they therefore remain limited in their ability to effect change. The organizations stress, however, that their actions are targeted at providing the support called for in many of the recommendations contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, and look forward to the completion of the second independent evaluation of UNAIDS, which is expected to propose changes to the organization and its governance and structure.

I. Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit report entitled "Review of the progress made by the United Nations system organizations in achieving Millennium Development Goal 6, Target 7, to combat HIV/AIDS", as contained in document A/63/152, focuses on the "role and involvement of the UNAIDS secretariat and the co-sponsors and other stakeholders" in achieving the goal to halt, and begin to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. The report reviews the background behind this component of the Millennium Development Goals and the creation and operation of UNAIDS. It examines the structure and function of that organization, along with the delivery mechanisms in place to achieve the target, including access to antiretroviral therapy, and the role of civil society organizations and the United Nations Department of Public Information. The recommendations of the report are aimed at strengthening the mandate of UNAIDS and the delivery of services in support of this Millennium Development Goal target.

II. General comments

2. CEB members expressed interest in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and welcomed its wide-ranging review of a very complex subject. Organizations commended the Joint Inspection Unit for recognizing the commitment and dedication of the staff members throughout the United Nations system who worked to address the many medical, economic and other challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and for bringing together the many threads that formed a unified response.

3. Organizations noted that achieving the Millennium Development Goals depended principally on actions by Member States and that many of the recommendations contained in the report therefore went beyond what organizations could achieve by themselves. Similarly, some of the recommendations of the report conflicted with the governance structures and mandates of the various co-sponsors and therefore would be very difficult to implement.

4. Organizations noted that the Joint Inspection Unit could have strengthened its report by including examples of areas in which current activities of the co-sponsors could improve. For example, recommendation 5 was intended to "enhance the effectiveness, coordination and accountability of UNAIDS at country level" by suggesting that agencies assist affected Member States in ways that supported the retention of health-care workers in those countries. However, the report, in paragraphs 77 and 78, described only the challenges faced by Member States in that area and did not include an analysis of the efforts by the co-sponsors to meet that need, when in practice activities that supported the recommendation already formed an integral part of the work of the co-sponsors. That was also the case with other recommendations, notably 6, 7, 8 and 10.

5. Organizations supported the call of the report for urgent innovative ideas on all fronts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. However, they also stressed that there would be greater merit in the further alignment of existing mechanisms and the scaling up of demonstrated best practices, rather than a focus only on generating innovative ideas. For example, the report proposed, in its section on "The way forward", that "poor developing countries could be provided with the necessary and timely

assistance that would enable them to establish their own versions of UNITAID [the International Drug Purchase Facility] and/or the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria that would guarantee them sustainable financing of large-scale HIV/AIDS-related programmes for treatment, care and support". Organizations urged caution in considering or encouraging the creation of additional funding mechanisms, as that would most likely cause more confusion and greater transaction costs, especially given the multiplicity of existing funding arrangements and flows.

6. Agencies of the United Nations system noted with satisfaction the call of the report for continuing support for the development of an HIV vaccine. They recognized that the development of a safe and effective HIV vaccine was a key component of a comprehensive response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. However, they maintained that an HIV vaccine would need to form just one component, albeit a very important one, of a complete package of prevention interventions, and they advocated for the continued and sustained implementation of a full package of prevention interventions while continuing to work to mitigate the socio-economic factors that were drivers for increased transmission of HIV (e.g., stigma, discrimination and gender inequality).

III. Specific comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1:

The Economic and Social Council should review and strengthen the mandate of UNAIDS, including by enhancing the authority of the secretariat, in order to effectively lead, coordinate and monitor the fight against HIV/AIDS and to ensure proper accountability of the co-sponsors to the Joint Programme. As part of the review, the number of co-sponsors should be restricted to the six original organizations/co-sponsors, namely the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank. Other organizations can participate through the co-sponsors on the basis of a memorandum of understanding.

7. Organizations of the United Nations system agree that a review of the role and mandate of UNAIDS may result in an enhancement of its ability to lead, coordinate and monitor the fight against HIV/AIDS and, in this regard, fully support the decision of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board to implement a second independent evaluation of the organization. They note that the evaluation, which is currently in progress, will, inter alia, consider the implications of the developments that have occurred in the countries most affected by HIV and the evolving global architecture for the response to HIV. Organizations suggest that it would be premature to determine the outcome of the evaluation at the present stage and stress that each of the co-sponsoring organizations has its own mandate and governance structure, which would subsequently have to endorse and implement any recommended changes.

8. With regard to the number of co-sponsors, organizations note that the Programme Coordinating Board has already endorsed well-established criteria for

UNAIDS co-sponsorship and, during the last biennium, placed a moratorium on the acceptance of new co-sponsors, along with an agreement among the co-sponsors that the Board was the sole authority to approve any new requests.

9. In its support of recommendation 1, the text of the Joint Inspection Unit report refers to an overlap of work among co-sponsors, including in the areas of prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, young people and prevention. Organizations note that no single agency can fully deliver on the broad range of interventions required to address those issues and that the shared responsibility for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV has resulted in a stronger partnership between lead (UNICEF and WHO) and partner agencies. However, organizations also recognize that there is an ongoing need to better define the division of labour among co-sponsors.

Recommendation 2:

The Economic and Social Council should review and revise the authority, role and responsibility of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, in order to enable it to have supervisory responsibility over the UNAIDS secretariat and its co-sponsors in relation to the joint programme on HIV/AIDS.

10. While agencies agree that the operation of UNAIDS presents many coordination challenges, they do not believe that recommendation 2 presents a useful direction for overcoming coordination obstacles. Agencies note that, since each of the co-sponsoring organizations has its own mandate and governance structure, any changes to the authority, role and responsibility of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board would still require endorsement beyond that of the Economic and Social Council.

11. Organizations of the United Nations system suggest that the analysis within the Joint Inspection Unit report that underpins recommendation 2 understates the authority of the existing governance structure, which ensures a shared accountability, along with mechanisms for the management and implementation of polices and decisions jointly through the Committee of co-sponsoring Organizations and regular reporting to the Programme Coordinating Board. The Committee is mandated to review the activities of each co-sponsoring organization to ensure consistency with the strategies of the Joint Programme, and its decisions are reported to the Board. Furthermore, the governing bodies of co-sponsors receive regular briefs on Board decisions and recommendations, along with reports on progress in implementing the decisions. Therefore, while improvements in the governance structure of UNAIDS may be necessary in order to maximize its effectiveness, other approaches should be examined first. In particular, agencies point to the second independent evaluation of UNAIDS, which will review the governance structures of UNAIDS, along with the interaction between the secretariat, co-sponsors, other agencies and countries, with a view towards recommending any necessary improvements.

Recommendation 3:

In order to enhance the effectiveness of UNAIDS at the country level, the executive heads of the UNAIDS secretariat and the co-sponsors should:

(a) **Select suitable UNAIDS country coordinators and agency heads in each country of accreditation, matching their political, cultural and diplomatic credentials with due consideration to cultural sensitivities and the local languages of the host countries;**

(b) **Establish a harmonized and/or unified reporting mechanism for the United Nations country teams;**

(c) **Undertake deliberate and concerted efforts to ensure the effective implementation of joint programmes.**

12. Organizations do not support component (a) of recommendation 3, as it does not reflect the realities of the operations of country teams and joint United Nations teams on HIV/AIDS. Agencies note that they strive to select suitable candidates for the positions indicated and believe that heads of agencies in affected countries fully meet the requirements stated within the recommendation. Organizations further point out that the recommendation does not consider that, for most co-sponsors, the appointed head of agency has a much broader responsibility than HIV, which requires skills and experience for a wider scope of work. Although agencies acknowledge the benefits of speaking the local language, they note that it is equally important to ensure that UNAIDS country coordinators understand key technical issues, along with the cultural sensitivities and structural make-up of the country.

13. Organizations support component (b) and note that UNAIDS is currently in the process of introducing an annual review process whereby joint United Nations country teams on AIDS will assess the progress and the impact of the Joint Programme, its effectiveness in support of national AIDS responses and the resources required to fulfil their responsibilities.

14. Organizations also support component (c), noting that activities to ensure the effective implementation of joint programmes are currently under way. Specifically, United Nations country teams have established joint teams on AIDS in 76 countries; 10 of those have prepared joint programmes of support on HIV/AIDS, with UNAIDS actively pursuing measures to ensure the effective implementation of joint programmes. A performance assessment tool that enables country teams to qualitatively assess the effectiveness of joint teams and programmes on AIDS will be used. Finally, UNAIDS is working with donors and other partners to ensure that financial support is given only to agencies that are implementing their programmes through a coordinated programme of support on AIDS.

Recommendation 4:

In order to enhance the effectiveness of the "Three Ones" principles, the executive heads of the UNAIDS secretariat and the co-sponsors should assist affected Member States to:

(a) **Ensure that national strategic plans of affected Member States are revised in conformity with these principles, are costed with detailed workplans and include marginalized and vulnerable populations, as well as refugees, in national strategic frameworks;**

(b) **Ensure that national AIDS councils are established effectively, with limited membership and with well-defined and clear roles and responsibilities;**

(c) **Ensure that Member States undertake appropriate measures to put in place a well-functioning monitoring and evaluation mechanism and provide adequate technical support.**

15. CEB members generally support the points contained within recommendation 4 but point out that all of them depend on actions within the affected Member State and that the United Nations cannot "ensure" that those actions take place. They note that United Nations organizations, including UNAIDS, already provide significant support to affected Member States in those areas.

Recommendation 5:

In order to enhance the effective implementation of universal access to antiretroviral therapy, the executive heads of the UNAIDS secretariat and the co-sponsors should:

(a) **Strongly advocate the need for launching aggressive national campaigns for voluntary HIV/AIDS testing and assist affected Member States to develop policies and programmes aimed at encouraging their citizens to voluntarily take HIV/AIDS tests;**

(b) **Assist affected Member States to ensure the harmonization of procurement procedures at the country level, as well as in establishing efficient supply management;**

(c) **Assist affected Member States to ensure that antiretroviral therapy programmes are integrated into sexual and reproductive health programmes and treatment services for tuberculosis and malaria.**

16. CEB members generally support recommendation 5 and note that all three components call for assisting affected Member States in ways that are already in place. Organizations point out that they already perform those activities and note that the text of the Joint Inspection Unit report does not indicate any insufficiencies on the part of United Nations organizations in implementing them.

Recommendation 6:

In order to enhance the effective implementation of universal access to antiretroviral therapy, the executive heads of the UNAIDS secretariat and the co-sponsors should:

(a) **Assist affected Member States in developing policies and procedures aimed at developing combined short- and long-term human resource strategies for the purpose of improving conditions for current workers;**

(b) **Provide technical support to develop adequate training programmes for health workers;**

(c) **Undertake advocacy programmes to discourage migration of health workers to other countries.**

17. Organizations support recommendation 6, noting that activities that address the challenges of support for health workers who provide care in affected countries are already in place.

Recommendation 7:

The executive heads of the UNAIDS secretariat and the co-sponsors should assist affected Member States in developing policies and procedures aimed at addressing the problem of stigma and discrimination. They should also undertake public awareness programmes to advocate that people living with HIV should enjoy the same legal rights as everyone else.

18. Organizations support recommendation 7, noting that activities to support the development of policies and procedures aimed at addressing the issue of stigma and discrimination are already an integral component of the work of UNAIDS. Organizations note that it is equally important to go beyond simply establishing policies, and to also ensure and enable their implementation.

Recommendation 8:

The executive heads of the UNAIDS secretariat and the co-sponsors should strongly encourage and assist affected Member States, in coordination with their donors, to take the necessary steps to re-emphasize the need to devise both immediate and long-term strategies for enhancing HIV prevention in synergy with the rapidly expanding antiretroviral therapy programmes.

19. Organizations support recommendation 8, noting that activities that support affected Member States in HIV prevention are already an integral component of the work of the co-sponsors. In addition, organizations note that the text of the report that supports recommendation 8 states, without any evidence, that "the scaling-up of antiretroviral therapy had shifted focus onto treatment and considerably weakened prevention efforts". They note that increasing evidence demonstrates that treatment complements and can facilitate prevention efforts and that the problem continues to be underinvestment in both HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, rather than the diversion of resources away from prevention to treatment efforts.

Recommendation 9:

The executive heads of the UNAIDS secretariat and the co-sponsors should strongly encourage and assist affected Member States in devising innovative financing mechanisms, both at the national and the international levels, to ensure long-term sustainability of antiretroviral therapy programmes.

20. Organizations support recommendation 9, noting that activities that support affected Member States in developing innovative financing mechanisms are already an integral component of the work of UNAIDS.

Recommendation 10:

The executive heads of the UNAIDS secretariat and the co-sponsors should encourage and assist affected Member States to:

(a) **Devise rules and regulations for registering and involving civil society partners in HIV/AIDS programmes;**

(b) **Build on the existing non-governmental organization Code of Good Practice and put in place a code of conduct for civil society partners with stringent action against abuse and/or improper use of funds.**

21. Agencies support recommendation 10, noting that the meaningful engagement of civil society remains an underlying principle of their work.

Recommendation 11:

The Secretary-General should:

(a) **Urge the Department of Public Information to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the UNAIDS secretariat, with the objective of identifying critical areas of cooperation and collaboration and with a view to ensuring effective dissemination of information on HIV/AIDS-related activities across the globe;**

(b) **Urge the Department of Public Information to assist in building the capacity of those countries that do not have the capacity and resources necessary to undertake effective AIDS awareness campaigns in their respective countries.**

22. Agencies of the United Nations system support recommendation 11 and note that UNAIDS already collaborates extensively with the Department of Public Information, pointing to the New York-based inter-agency working group on AIDS, which includes the UNAIDS secretariat and all co-sponsors, along with other interested United Nations agencies and United Nations Secretariat offices, including the Department of Public Information. The working group collaborates on the planning of activities for World AIDS Day events and high-level meetings on HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS country-level mechanisms, such as the theme groups on HIV/AIDS, are open to all partners in the United Nations system working on HIV/AIDS, many of whom are actively engaged in supporting the efforts of countries to plan and implement awareness campaigns. In many countries, the theme groups on HIV/AIDS have welcomed additional support from the Department of Public Information. Therefore, while organizations agree that a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Public Information may prove useful, they also question the necessity, given the high level of coordination and cooperation that already exists.